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COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

CHAPTER 2—ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Description of the Alternatives

As outlined in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) *Land Use Planning Handbook* (H-1601-1), alternatives must “identify a range of reasonable combinations of resource uses and management practices.” The regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in Section 1502.4, Title 40, of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) require that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives to a proposed action. The public scoping process, which officially began for the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) in December 2001 with the publication of the BLM’s Notice of Intent to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP), has provided the BLM with a great deal of input into the development of both reasonable and practical management alternatives. Based on that input and internal input from BLM resource specialists; four alternatives, including a “no action” alternative required by planning regulations, were developed.

Further guidance provided through specific language within the enabling legislation precluded many actions that would have affected alternative development:

- The entire CCNCA is closed to all mineral development, including leasing, locatable mineral entry, and mineral material disposal.
- The RMP would allow continued management of grazing leases and permits in accordance with current BLM policy and the Wilderness Act.
- The RMP would recognize that neither the Conservation Area nor the Wilderness shall include any part of the Colorado River.

These limitations and the extensive collaboration process resulted in the four alternatives presented here as the only alternatives to be analyzed in detail—no other alternatives were considered. All four alternatives comply with state and federal regulations, laws, and standards, including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 106-353, the CCNCA Planning Criteria (see Chapter 1), BLM best management practices (BMP), and standard mitigation. In addition, all alternatives include measures for achieving Colorado

Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado (BLM 1996) (Appendix 1).

This entire process has ensured that a preferred alternative, used for the long-range management and protection of the CCNCA, is chosen from a comprehensive compilation of alternatives.

The four alternatives represent four directions management of the CCNCA could take and still meet the purpose and need for this RMP, and also remain consistent with the management objectives identified through the scoping process. Each alternative emphasizes a different approach to the management of the area and incorporates a unique set of objectives. The range of reasonable alternatives developed for this plan is:

Alternative 1— Continuation of Existing Management: This "No-Action Alternative" leaves all management of the area in its current management situation as guided by the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-353), the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Wilderness Integrated Management Plan (1998), the Grand Junction Resource Area Resource Management Plan, the Interim Management Policy for BLM National Monuments and National Conservation Areas, and the Colorado State Director's Guidance for the CCNCA. All actions associated with the Alternative 1 implement requirements of the above policy and guidance documents.

Alternative 2—Recreation Emphasis: The emphasis of this alternative is maximizing multiple-use, recreation opportunities while conserving and protecting traditional uses and protecting natural resources to the maximum extent possible. Objectives of this alternative include preserving and enhancing traditional recreation activities such as hiking, camping, mountain biking, and backpacking, and maintaining current land health and improving priority areas of concern. Using a higher percentage of non-native species as necessary to stabilize soils is a possibility.

Alternative 3—Modified Recreation or Adaptive Management: As the BLM and CCNCA Advisory Council preferred alternative, this alternative's emphasis is on maintaining the current level of experience and enjoyment of the area's recreational opportunities and unique characteristics while recognizing that increased future use would trigger the need for increased levels of management. Monitoring for land health and visitors' experiences would determine when adjustments to management would be required. Objectives for this alternative include preserving the character of the area and enhancing traditional recreation, while maintaining land health and improving priority areas of concern.

Alternative 4—Conservation Emphasis: The emphasis of this alternative is on maximizing the conservation of natural resources in the CCNCA while still maintaining traditional uses and recreational opportunities to the greatest extent possible. Objectives include improving land health in all areas of concern, preserving the character of the area, and expanding education and interpretation opportunities in all areas.

2.2 Management Objectives

Through more than 100 community-based meetings and planning activities scheduled over a 14-month period, management objectives that would guide the BLM for the next 10 to 15 years were formulated for the CCNCA. The following are comprehensive management objectives, common to all four alternatives:

- Preserve and protect the nationally significant area for the enjoyment of present and future generations.
- Allow continued management of grazing leases and permits in accordance with current BLM policy and with the Wilderness Act.
- The BLM and the grazing permittees would work together to manage grazing for sustainability and conservation in accordance with land health guidelines and standards for rangeland health.
- Establish travel management goals and actions allowing motorized vehicle use only on roads and trails designated for motorized use.
- Expand education and interpretation opportunities in all areas.
- Limit all use to existing roads and trails.

The BLM believes it is meeting the challenges presented in this planning process by incorporating the requirements of the enabling legislation; by determining the implementation status of previous decisions; and, with the aid of both the Citizens' Advisory Council and Working Groups, by identifying new issues that have emerged since the Ruby Canyon Plan's publication in 1998.

2.3 Alternatives Discussion by Resource

2.3.1 *Alternative 1—Continuation of Existing Management*

Lands and Rights-of-Way

The BLM would continue to acquire, from willing sellers, private inholdings within the CCNCA boundaries as well as along the boundaries.

Rights-of-Way (ROW) proposals would be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis and would be subject to constraints, sensitive resource areas, and issues identified in the CCNCA plan and other applicable documents and policies.

Utility line proposals, from within the Interstate 70 (I-70) corridor to the Colorado River or in the upper Black Ridge road area, would be required to be located underground and along the edge of or within roadways, or within the railroad right-of-way. Additions or modifications to aboveground utilities would only be considered within the existing utility corridors where aboveground facilities presently exist. Underground utility proposals would also be considered in these existing corridors. ROWs would be excluded from the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness (BRCW) area.

All roads administered by the BLM would be maintained in their current condition, and no improvement would be permitted through ROW authorizations. Any new roads that could be authorized would be constructed to minimal widths and standards similar to nearby existing "jeep roads." Any such new roads could also be gated to prevent, or limit, public vehicle access.

Additional communication towers at the existing Rabbit Valley Communication Site would be considered if the proposed use was located within 250 feet (ft) of the existing cellular telephone tower, involved a minimal and unlighted tower structure (1.5 ft lattice with wand at top, under 60 ft in height), and was not obvious to a casual observer from the I-70 corridor. Minor additions or modifications of other existing communication sites (excluding the Black Ridge Site, which has an approved management plan that is consistent with CCNCA objections) would also be considered. In all cases, collocation on existing facilities would be preferred. No additional communication sites would be considered at other areas. The BLM reserves the right to develop minor communication facilities for administrative purposes.

I-70 and railroad maintenance or emergency repair would be coordinated with the BLM and actions taken to reasonably protect resource values. The BLM could also request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to consider removing the requirement for the

strobe light on the Upper Black Ridge Railroad Communication Site.

Mesa County and BLM staff would coordinate maintenance activities on Mesa County roads. In response to potential development on private inholdings, the BLM could request Mesa County consideration of land use permitting restrictions on private inholdings for protecting the overall landscape and land use character. Requested restrictions could include limiting land uses or subdivision of property, limiting any development to a portion of the private land, locating and designing developments to minimize adverse impacts to the landscape, limiting use of exterior lights, or providing for limited public access.

Geology and Topography

The BLM would identify important geologic features for possible special management consideration while preserving and protecting the geologic resources.

Soils

The BLM would adhere to BMP and exercise careful placement of proposed trails and facilities. To encourage the protection of soils, activities such as recreation, access and travel routes, and grazing would be managed to minimize erosion, salinity and selenium yields, and compaction. A strong emphasis on minimum impact techniques, through CCNCA visitor education, would be extremely important if protection and conservation of the soil resource for future generations is to be realized.

Minerals and Energy Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all federal land within the CCNCA and the BRCW, and all land and interests in land acquired for the Conservation Area or the Wilderness by the United States are withdrawn from:

- 1) all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;
- 2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and
- 3) the operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws, and all amendments thereto.

Valid existing rights would be processed within specified or applicable time frames.

Water Resources

Surface Water

The BLM would manage all activity within the CCNCA to ensure that water quality standards are met, or exceeded, using BLM Land Health Standards (Appendix 1, Standard 5–Water Quality) as the water quality indicator.

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Any activity in the CCNCA and BRCW would incorporate mitigation into management actions to protect water resources. Measures designed to minimize erosion and water quality deterioration would continue to be required in site-specific plans for any activity requiring surface disturbance in the CCNCA. Measures to minimize erosion and water quality affects would be further analyzed in environmental assessments for any surface disturbing activities in the CCNCA per requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The BLM would work with the Grand Valley Selenium Task Force to address elevated selenium levels in Salt Creek, and other entities to minimize sediment and salinity production within the CCNCA.

Ground Water

The BLM would continue to manage to preserve and protect ground water resources, including springs, and would pursue completion of

an inventory of springs. Inventoried springs in the CCNCA would not be developed but would continue to be used by hikers and wildlife, as well as to sustain associated riparian areas. The BLM would continue to utilize existing water wells for stock watering purposes.

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Climate and Air Quality

Activities and projects on BLM-managed lands would comply with applicable local, state, and federal air quality regulations. National Ambient Air Quality Standards would be met, or exceeded, for all activity occurring in the CCNCA. Mitigation to minimize air quality degradation would be incorporated into project proposals as appropriate.

Noise

Public lands would be managed in accordance with Colorado NS 25-12-106.

Vegetation

The BLM would attain, or maintain, Desired Plant Community (DPC) objectives determined in the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated RMP (see Appendix 8). Existing areas meeting land health standards would be maintained and management actions implemented to reclaim areas not meeting land health standards.

Vegetation–Weed Management

The BLM would manage noxious weeds using an Integrated Weed Management (IWM) approach, while incorporating weed education information into CCNCA literature, web sites, and key entry points into the CCNCA. The BLM's Partners Against Weeds (PAWs) action plan is a comprehensive strategy providing guidance for preventing and controlling the spread of noxious weeds. Goals of the PAWs plan are prevention and detection, education and awareness, inventory, planning, Integrated Weed Management, monitoring and evaluation, and research and technology transfer. PAWs and additional guidance such as the Certified Weed-Free Forage Program are integral to the CCNCA weed management program.

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory of purple loosestrife and Hoary Cress within the River Corridor, conduct a 3-year inventory cycle for Wilderness, and a 5-year inventory for the remaining acreage in the CCNCA.

Tamarisk

The BLM would manage tamarisk around spring sites in the Wilderness, releasing bio agents, if approved, for large-scale reduction in extensive stands. Tamarisk would also be managed at select sites in the River Corridor.

Purple Loosestrife

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater (Utah).

Russian Knapweed

The BLM would continue eradication efforts from Mee Corner to Mee Canyon, along the south bank of the Colorado River. It would also attempt eradication of Russian knapweed on Machinery Bottom and continue Wilderness treatments of Russian knapweed and Canada thistle until completely eradicated.

Hoary Cress (Whitetop)

The BLM would conduct annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater to control Hoary Cress and

would continue treatment of infestations at Salt Creek and I-70.

Forestry

The BLM would allow fuel woodcutting and fence post cutting in the Black Ridge area.

Wildlife, Fish and Aquatic Species

The BLM would facilitate the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) population management plans and develop basic informational facilities for the Rabbit Valley Watchable Wildlife Site. The features making Rabbit Valley a designated State Important Bird Area would be guarded.

Objectives of the previous plans for this area would be pursued by implementing educational and habitat improvement projects such as producing 30-second spots to be aired on local TV, a short-range radio broadcast system, signs at visitor stops, brochures, activity books, and small water catchments (guzzlers). The positive tone of all educational messages would be continued.

Special Status Species

In fulfilling all requirements under the Endangered Species Act, as well as BLM Policy Manual 6840, the BLM would meet habitat obligations for the six listed and two candidate species, while continuing to protect 25 BLM-listed sensitive species within the CCNCA. Three species listed under the state endangered species statute would also come under this umbrella.

Policies of a narrow tolerance for toxicants and pesticides, protection of peregrine eyries, and openness to restoration of native species populations would be continued.

Rangeland

Grazing use would be in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, FLPMA, Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), 43 CFR 100 and 4180, the Wilderness Act, grazing permits, and BLM Policy.

Current livestock management would be maintained and changes made if monitoring indicates downward trends or a failure to meet standards. Intensive grazing management plans (Allotment Management Plan) would be established for allotments where

additional management is deemed necessary. Any grazing permit that is relinquished or canceled would be evaluated for future allocation and level of use.

Additional range improvements would be utilized to improve grazing management in accordance with grazing management plans. Vegetation studies and experiments would be maintained, and rehabilitation efforts applied if appropriate for the area.

Livestock grazing would be excluded from Mee, Knowles, and Rattlesnake Canyons to protect riparian values, and the Colorado River allotment would remain in an unallotted status to protect resources.

Domestic sheep use would be excluded from the Lower Bench and Colorado Ridge allotments and north of Black Ridge via existing agreements. Sheep grazing north of the river would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Domestic sheep use managed by Utah, within the CCNCA, would not be affected.

The public would be educated on livestock grazing and its relationship to the environment and natural cycles.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be managed according to existing legislation, regulations, Executive Orders, and BLM policy. Measures to protect and manage cultural resources would be required in all land use activity plans, including those associated with recreation management and off-highway vehicle (OHV) activities. Measures would be designed in conjunction with appropriate consulting parties as defined by the BLM National Programmatic Agreement, Colorado State Protocol, and BLM Manual (8100 series) addressing cultural resource management.

Section 106 of the NHPA would be completed for federally funded or licensed undertakings prior to all surface-disturbing or other activities that could affect cultural resources. Identify cultural resources and areas of religious and cultural importance that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and assign to the appropriate cultural resource use allocation. Mitigation should be completed on historic properties that are adversely affected by the undertaking. Preservation of resources in place is the preferred mitigation strategy.

Proposed activities would not be approved until compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA has been completed and documented. Cultural resource condition would be monitored during implementation.

Develop and implement a base-level proactive cultural resource program required under Section 110 of the NHPA. A reasonable amount of outreach/customer service work, Native American consultation, interpretation and environmental education, cultural resource inventories, data recovery and recordation efforts, restoration and protection of "at-risk" site efforts, and systematic monitoring of cultural sites treatments are to be completed annually. The level of proactive cultural resource program work would be determined annually within constraints of available funds and staff.

Paleontological Resources

The BLM would leave all paleontological management of the area in its current management situation as guided by the BLM 8270 Manual and Handbook for the Management of Paleontological Resources, the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Act of 2000, the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Wilderness Integrated Management Plan, the Grand Junction Resource Area Resource Management Plan, the Interim Management Policy for BLM National Monuments and National Conservation Areas, and the Colorado State Director's Guidance for the CCNCA.

Recreation

Because of the complexity of the recreation portion of this RMP, the proposed actions under each of the four alternatives are discussed by planning zone. Those planning zones within the CCNCA are Mack Ridge, Rabbit Valley, the River Corridor, and the BRCW. Proposed management actions that are common to all alternatives developed for this RMP (Alternatives 1 through 4), and specifically address recreation, are discussed in Section 2.3.5 of this chapter.

To provide a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics involved in wisely planning for recreation as a resource, discussions on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), Benefits-Based Management (BBM), and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are provided in Appendix 5 of this RMP.

Recreation (by Zone)—Mack Ridge

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 1, the “no action” alternative (see Figure ES-1).

Trail Proposals: Cross-country riding would be allowed for casual equestrian use.

Dirt Road Proposals: No new gates or motorized barriers would be proposed, and designated dirt roads would remain open to motorized use.

Camping: There would be no camping facilities within the Mack Ridge Zone.

Facilities: There would be no new restrooms.

Interpretation/Education: Mileages would be provided on trailhead signs, but no directional travel would be prescribed.

Permit Program: There would be no limit on the number of commercial mountain bike permits, and all equestrian proposals would be considered. There would be no specified limit on the number of events.

Recreation (by Zone)—Rabbit Valley Zone

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 1, the “no action” alternative (see Figure ES-5).

Trail Proposals: Cross-country riding would be allowed for casual equestrian use, while no trails would be constructed on Harley Dome. Dead-end routes protruding south from the frontage road east of the main entrance would remain as they are. A single-track route would not be designated, beginning west of The Trail Through Time stock pond, heading north and west across the rim, although casual hiking and equestrian use would be allowed. The existing route extending from the end of the Rabbit’s Ear Trail, however, would be designated (Action No. 17 on Figure ES-5). With this alternative, a single-track loop (open to motorcycles) would not be constructed off the Gibson access road to east of the Rabbit’s Ear Trail (Action No. 20 on Figure ES-6 and ES-7). Casual hiking and equestrian use would be allowed on the undesignated route just north of I-70, near the Utah border.

Dirt Road Proposals: A river access road would not be constructed, under Alternative 1 (Action No. 18 on Figure ES-6 and ES-7).

Camping: Current management would prevail with dispersed camping sites not designated, nor would fire pans or fuel stoves be required. However, cutting standing vegetation would be prohibited.

Target Shooting: There would be no target shooting north of I-70.

Facilities: Parking areas, trailheads, and group campsites would be maintained at their current level.

Recreation (by Zone)—River Corridor

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 1, the “no action” alternative (see Figure ES-9).

Trails: The size of groups traveling in the canyons south of the Colorado River would be limited to 25 individuals.

Dirt Road Proposals: Current vehicle access to the Colorado River from Rustler’s Loop would be allowed.

Camping: The current voluntary campsite reservation system at Loma Boat Launch, with selected campsites identified on a map, would be continued. Fire pans or propane heaters would be required year-round for overnight use, and portable toilets would be required for all river users year-round as well. There would be no cutting of standing vegetation.

Recreation (by Zone)—Wilderness

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 1, the “no action” alternative (see Figure ES-10).

Trail Proposals: There would be no trail developed heading north from the Jones Canyon Trailhead, and an alternate trailhead for Mee Canyon would not be designated.

Groups traveling in the canyons south of the Colorado River would be limited in size to 25 individuals, and groups traveling to Rattlesnake Arches would be limited to 12 individuals.

Facilities would not be developed in the Opal Hill area.

Dirt Road Proposals: The lower Black Ridge access road and the Rattlesnake Arches access road would be maintained at the current standard, and the current parking situation at the sagebrush flats would also be maintained.

Camping: Dispersed camping would be allowed along the upper and lower Black Ridge roads with no mandatory requirements for portable toilets and fire pans. Firewood would be limited to down material with no cutting of standing-dead or live vegetation.

Facilities: The Knowles Canyon Trailhead would not be moved to Road F (Figure ES-10) nor expanded to accommodate additional parking.

2.3.2 *Alternative 2—Recreation Emphasis*

Lands and Rights-of-Way

The BLM would actively pursue acquiring, from willing sellers, private inholdings within CCNCA boundaries as well as along the boundaries.

ROW proposals would be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis and would be subject to constraints, sensitive resource areas, and issues identified in the CCNCA plan and other applicable documents and policies.

Utility line proposals, from within the I-70 corridor to the Colorado River or in the upper Black Ridge road area, would be required to be located underground and along the edge of or within roadways, or within the railroad right-of-way. Additions or modifications to aboveground utilities would only be considered within the existing utility corridors where aboveground facilities presently exist. Underground utility proposals would also be considered in these existing corridors. ROWs would be excluded from the BRCW area.

All roads administered by BLM would be maintained in their current condition, and no improvement would be permitted through ROW authorizations. Any new roads that could be authorized would be constructed to minimal widths and standards similar to nearby existing “jeep roads.” Any such new roads could also be gated to prevent, or limit, public vehicle access.

Additional communication towers at the existing Rabbit Valley Communication Site would be considered if the proposed use was

located within 250 ft of the existing cellular telephone tower, involved a minimal and unlighted tower structure (1.5 ft lattice with wand at top, under 60 ft in height), and was not obvious to a casual observer from the I-70 corridor. Minor additions or modifications of other existing communication sites (excluding Black Ridge Site) would also be considered. In all cases, collocation on existing facilities would be preferred. No additional communication sites would be considered at other areas. The BLM reserves the right to develop minor communication facilities for administrative purposes.

I-70 and railroad maintenance or emergency repair would be coordinated with the BLM and actions taken to reasonably protect resource values. The BLM could also request the FAA to consider removing the requirement for the strobe light on the Upper Black Ridge Railroad Communication Site.

Mesa County and BLM staff would coordinate maintenance activities on Mesa County roads. In response to potential development on private inholdings, the BLM could request Mesa County consideration of land use permitting restrictions on private inholdings for protecting the overall landscape and land use character. Requested restrictions could include limiting land uses or subdivision of property, limiting any development to a portion of the private land, locating and designing developments to minimize adverse impacts to the landscape, limiting use of exterior lights, or providing for limited public access.

Geology and Topography

The BLM would identify important geologic features for possible special management consideration while preserving and protecting the geologic resources.

Soils

The BLM would adhere to BMP and exercise careful placement of proposed trails and facilities. Soils would be managed to minimize erosion, salinity and selenium yields, and compaction. A strong emphasis on minimum impact techniques, through CCNCA visitor education, would be extremely important if protection and conservation of the soil resource for future generations is to be realized.

Minerals and Energy Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all federal land within the CCNCA and the BRCW, and all land and interests in land acquired for the Conservation Area or the Wilderness by the United States are withdrawn from:

- 1) all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;
- 2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and
- 3) the operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws, and all amendments thereto.

Valid existing rights would be processed within specified or applicable time frames.

Water Resources

Surface Water

The BLM would manage all activity within the CCNCA to ensure that water quality standards are met, or exceeded, using BLM Land Health Standards (Appendix 1, Standard 5–Water Quality) as the water quality indicator.

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Any activity in the CCNCA and BRCW would incorporate mitigation into management actions to protect water resources. Measures designed to minimize erosion and water quality deterioration would continue to be required in site-specific plans for any activity

requiring surface disturbance in the CCNCA. Measures to minimize erosion and water quality affects would be further analyzed in environmental assessments for any surface disturbing activities in the CCNCA per requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The BLM would work with the Grand Valley Selenium Task Force to address elevated selenium levels in Salt Creek, and other entities to minimize sediment and salinity production within the CCNCA.

Ground Water

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Climate and Air Quality

Activities and projects on BLM-managed lands would comply with applicable local, state, and federal air quality regulations. National Ambient Air Quality Standards would be met, or exceeded, for all activity occurring in the CCNCA. Mitigation to minimize air quality degradation would be incorporated into project proposals as appropriate.

Noise

Public lands would be managed in accordance with Colorado NS 25-12-106.

Vegetation

The BLM would attain, or maintain, DPC objectives determined in the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated RMP (see Appendix 8). Existing areas meeting land health standards would be maintained, and management actions implemented to reclaim areas not meeting standards.

More acres not meeting the land health standard would be allowed. These areas would mostly be in areas of concentrated activities and livestock use. Reclamation efforts would be concentrated in the River Corridor and special concern areas. Reclamation, mitigation, and rehabilitation projects could make maximum use of non-native plant species.

Under Alternative 2, it was important to explore the need for rehabilitation (stabilization) of some of the more drastically reduced lands north of the Colorado River. The Rabbit Valley landscape has the highest percentage of lands not meeting the land health standards of any place within the CCNCA. In addition these sites are some of the harshest environments to be found in the Grand Valley. The annual rainfall averages 8 inches or less per year and currently has undergone a 5-year drought. Past wildfire restoration efforts using native plants have proven to be futile.

Under this alternative native species would continue to be used, but some sites subject to extreme conditions and past failures and high levels of cheatgrass or noxious weeds would be candidates for using drought tolerant non-native plants. Areas subject to accelerated erosion would be candidates for more aggressive use of non-native plants as part of a reclamation project.

Some of the non-native plants to consider could include crested wheat (Hycrest), Siberian wheatgrass, or a number of cultivars and hybrids of plants that may not be native to Rabbit Valley but would perform under the harsh conditions that exist.

Vegetation–Weed Management

The BLM would manage noxious weeds using an IWM approach, while incorporating weed education information into CCNCA literature, web sites, and key entry points into the CCNCA. The BLM's Partners Against Weeds (PAWs) action plan is a comprehensive strategy providing guidance for preventing and controlling the spread of noxious weeds. Goals of the PAWs plan are prevention and detection, education and awareness, inventory, planning, Integrated Weed Management, monitoring and

evaluation, and research and technology transfer. PAWs and additional guidance such as the Certified Weed-Free Forage Program are integral to the CCNCA weed management program.

There would also be extensive weed inventory and treatment prior to any facility construction, e.g. eliminating weeds before a designated river campsite is constructed.

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory of purple loosestrife and Hoary Cress within the River Corridor, conduct a 3-year inventory cycle for Wilderness, and a 5-year inventory for the remaining acreage in the CCNCA.

Tamarisk

The BLM would manage tamarisk around spring sites in the Wilderness, releasing bio agents, if approved, for large-scale reduction in extensive stands. Tamarisk would also be managed at select sites in the River Corridor.

Purple Loosestrife

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater (Utah).

Russian Knapweed

The BLM would continue eradication efforts from Mee Corner to Mee Canyon, along the south bank of the Colorado River. It would also attempt eradication of Russian knapweed on Machinery Bottom and continue Wilderness treatments of Russian knapweed and Canada thistle until completely eradicated.

Hoary Cress (Whitetop)

The BLM would conduct annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater to control Hoary Cress and would continue treatment of infestations at Salt Creek and I-70.

Forestry

The practice of taking woodland products within the CCNCA would be discontinued. The option of allowing some cutting to facilitate

clearing trees for trails, other recreation projects, and wildlife projects should be considered.

Wildlife, Fish and Aquatic Species

The BLM would facilitate CDOW population management plans and develop basic informational facilities for the Rabbit Valley Watchable Wildlife Site. The features making Rabbit Valley a designated State Important Bird Area would be guarded.

Objectives of the previous plans for this area would be pursued by implementing educational and habitat improvement projects such as producing 30-second spots to be aired on local TV, a short-range radio broadcast system, signs at visitor stops, brochures, activity books, and small water catchments (guzzlers). The positive tone of all educational messages would be continued. Monitoring, design of recreational activities, and education with a focus on the effects of recreation activities on fish and wildlife would be emphasized.

Special Status Species

In fulfilling all requirements under the Endangered Species Act, as well as BLM Policy Manual 6840, the BLM would meet habitat obligations for the six listed and two candidate species, while continuing to protect 25 BLM-listed sensitive species within the CCNCA. Three species listed under the state endangered species statute would also come under this umbrella.

Monitoring would be emphasized, and recreational activities and education would be designed to focus on the effects of recreation activities on special status species.

Policies of a narrow tolerance for toxicants and pesticides, protection of peregrine eyries, and openness to restoration of native species populations would be continued.

Rangeland

Grazing use would be in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, FLPMA, Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), 43 CFR 100 and 4180, the Wilderness Act, grazing permits, and BLM Policy.

Current livestock management would be maintained and changes made if monitoring indicates downward trends or a failure to meet standards. Intensive grazing management plans (Allotment

Management Plan) would be established for allotments where additional management is deemed necessary. Any grazing permit that is relinquished or canceled would be evaluated for future allocation and level of use.

Additional range improvements would be utilized to improve grazing management in accordance with grazing management plans. Vegetation studies and experiments would be maintained and rehabilitation efforts appropriate for the area would be applied.

Livestock grazing would be excluded from Mee, Knowles, and Rattlesnake Canyons to protect riparian values, and the Colorado River allotment would remain in an unallotted status to protect resources.

Domestic sheep use would be excluded in the Lower Bench and Colorado Ridge allotments and north of Black Ridge via existing agreements. Sheep grazing north of the river would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Domestic sheep use managed by Utah within the CCNCA would not be affected.

The public would be educated on livestock grazing and its relationship to the environment and natural cycles.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be managed according to existing legislation, regulations, Executive Orders, and BLM policy. Measures to protect and manage cultural resources would be required in all land use activity plans, including those associated with recreation management and off-highway vehicle (OHV) activities. Measures would be designed in conjunction with appropriate consulting parties as defined by the BLM National Programmatic Agreement, Colorado State Protocol, and BLM Manual (8100 series) addressing cultural resource management.

Section 106 of the NHPA would be completed for federally funded or licensed undertakings prior to all surface-disturbing or other activities that could affect cultural resources. Identify cultural resources and areas of religious and cultural importance that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and assign to the appropriate cultural resource use allocation. Mitigation should be completed on historic properties that are adversely affected by the undertaking. Preservation of resources in place is the preferred mitigation strategy.

Proposed activities would not be approved until compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA has been completed and documented. Cultural resource condition would be monitored during implementation.

Develop and implement a base-level proactive cultural resource program required under Section 110 of the NHPA. A reasonable amount of outreach/customer service work, Native American consultation, interpretation and environmental education, cultural resource inventories, data recovery and recordation efforts, restoration and protection of "at-risk" site efforts, and systematic monitoring of cultural sites treatments are to be completed annually. The level of proactive cultural resource program work would be determined annually within constraints of available funds and staff.

Paleontological Resources

The CCNCA (including BRCW but excluding Dinosaur Hill Paleontological Area, Fruita Paleontological Area, Rabbit Valley Research Natural Area, and Split Rock) would be open to recreational collecting of common invertebrate and plant fossils. Scientific collecting would be allowed by valid BLM Paleontological Resources Use Permit only.

Monitoring and other information would be compiled, updated, and analyzed at least annually to help in management decisions concerning appropriate uses, education/interpretation, and protection and preservation of paleontological resources.

Recreation (by Zone)—Mack Ridge

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 2, the "recreation emphasis" alternative (see Figure ES-2).

Trail Proposals: Cross-country riding would be allowed for casual use. Trail A would be designated utilizing dirt roads and approximately ½-mile of new construction (single track). Segment E would be constructed to connect trail segment A and the Mary's Loop Trail. Trail K, which runs parallel along the south side of the frontage (Hawkeye) road, would be constructed.

Connector J would be constructed between the southern-most point of the Troy Built Trail and the end of the Mack Ridge single-track trail. Trail F would be constructed connecting the Mack Ridge Trail to the Mack Ridge Trailhead. Segment D connecting segment F to

the Mary's Loop access from the frontage road would also be constructed, allowing an alternative Mack Ridge Trail route for equestrians. Segment G would be constructed from the frontage road to the gated dirt road.

Dirt Road Proposals: Roads would be gated or motorized barriers placed at 7 locations as shown on Figure ES-2. Motorized use would be limited to roads on the west portion of the trail system, county roads, and access to parking areas.

Camping: Primitive campsites outside of general day use influence would be considered to accommodate short-term Mark Ridge and Loma Launch users.

Facilities: Restrooms would be provided at all trailheads.

Interpretation/Education: Trailhead signs would be provided reflecting information regarding challenge level, trail length, and estimated completion time. The trailhead sign at Horsethief Bench should recommend directional travel for mountain bikes (clockwise) and equestrians (counter-clockwise).

Permits: Full-time commercial mountain bike permits would be limited to 8 at any one time. Equestrian events might occur on weekdays and weekends. There would be no limit on the number of events.

Recreation (by Zone)—Rabbit Valley

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 2, the “recreation emphasis” alternative (see Figure ES-6).

Trail Proposals: Cross-country riding would be allowed for casual equestrian use.

A single-track trail system would be developed on Harley Dome. Action No. 11, shown on Figure ES-6, would relocate Trail No. 2 off the valley floor to the escarpment west of the main entrance. Action No. 12 would connect Trail No. 4 to Trail No. 3 along the upper escarpment. Through Action No. 13, Trail No. 3 would be relocated to the opposite side of the drainage and connected to Trail No. 4. Noted as Action No. 14, dead-end routes protruding south from the frontage road east of the main entrance would be connected by a system of single-track and ATV trails.

Action No. 15 shows relocating Trails Nos. 4 and 5 to the valley floor and the dry wash running east-west in the same area. A single-track route would be designated (Action No. 16) that begins west of The Trail Through Time at the stock pond and continues north and west across the rim, dropping into the wash and continuing to the state line. Action No. 17 continues the existing route at the end of the Rabbit's Ear Trail to create a designated loop trail on top of the mesa.

In Action No. 20, a single-track loop (open to motorcycles) would be constructed off the Gibson access road to the east of the Rabbit's Ear Trail, and the road below the trail intersection would be gated to prevent public access to the Gibson property. The undesignated route just north of I-70 near the Utah border would be closed and rehabilitated.

Dirt Road Proposals: If feasible, a river access point would be provided from the southern end of Trail No. 8 (see Action No. 18 on Figure ES-6), and a parking lot would be developed at the upper rim to maintain a ¼-mile river buffer and prevent vehicle access along the shore vicinity.

Camping: Dispersed camping sites would not be designated, and fire pans or fuel stoves would not be required. Woodcutting would be prohibited.

Target Shooting: If feasible, a target-shooting site north of I-70 would be considered.

Facilities: Parking areas and trailheads would be paved and surfaces hardened at group sites.

Recreation (by Zone)—River Corridor

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 2, the "recreation emphasis" alternative (see Figure ES-9).

Trail Proposals: Limiting group size to 25 individuals in the lower two miles of Mee and Knowles Canyons would be encouraged. Access to the Colorado River from Rustler's Loop would be restricted for the purpose of keeping vehicles ¼-mile from the shoreline.

Camping: Registration for proposed campsites would be required at Loma Boat Launch, and campsite locations would be identified by numbered posts. Fire pans or propane heaters would be

required year-round for overnight use, and portable toilets would be required for all river users year-round as well. Woodcutting would be prohibited.

Recreation (by Zone)—Wilderness

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 2, the “recreation emphasis” alternative (see Figure ES-10).

Trail Proposals: A hiking and equestrian trail, heading north from the Jones Canyon Trailhead, would be developed if needed for mitigating impacts. An alternate Mee Canyon Trailhead would be designated at the intersection of the upper and lower Black Ridge roads.

Limiting group size to 25 individuals in the lower two miles of Mee and Knowles Canyons would be encouraged, as would limiting group size to 12 elsewhere in the Wilderness. Hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use would be allowed in the vicinity of Opal Hill.

Dirt Road Proposals: The maintenance levels would be upgraded for both the lower Black Ridge and the Rattlesnake Arches access roads. A parking area would be created at the sagebrush flats on lower Black Ridge road just before the intersection with the upper Black Ridge road.

Camping: Dispersed camping would be allowed along the upper and lower Black Ridge roads with no mandatory requirements for portable toilets and fire pans. Woodcutting or gathering south of the Wilderness boundary would be limited to areas where chaining has occurred.

Facilities: Parking would be allowed, and the “turnaround” improved at the end of the Rattlesnake Arches access road, but the area would be contained to prevent encroachment. Additional parking areas would be created along the Rattlesnake Arches road, designed for turnarounds, and contained to prevent encroachment.

The Knowles Canyon Trailhead would be moved to Road F (see Figure ES-10) and expanded to accommodate additional parking.

2.3.3 *Alternative 3—Modified Recreation or Adaptive Management*

Lands and Rights-of-Way

The BLM would actively pursue acquiring, from willing sellers, private inholdings within CCNCA boundaries as well as along the boundaries.

ROW proposals would be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis and would be subject to constraints, sensitive resource areas, and issues identified in the CCNCA plan and other applicable documents and policies.

Utility line proposals, from within I-70 corridor to the Colorado River or in the Upper Black Ridge road area, would be required to be located underground and along the edge of or within roadways, or within the railroad right-of-way. Additions or modifications to aboveground utilities would only be considered within the existing utility corridors where aboveground facilities presently exist. Underground utility proposals would also be considered in these existing corridors. ROWs would be excluded from the BRCW area.

All roads administered by the BLM would be maintained in their current condition, and no improvement would be permitted through ROW authorizations. Any new roads that could be authorized would be constructed to minimal widths and standards similar to nearby existing "jeep roads." Any such new roads could also be gated to prevent, or limit, public vehicle access.

Additional communication towers at the existing Rabbit Valley Communication Site would be considered if the proposed use was located within 250 ft of the existing cellular telephone tower, involved a minimal and unlighted tower structure (1.5 ft lattice with wand at top, under 60 ft in height), and was not obvious to a casual observer from the I-70 corridor. Minor additions or modifications of other existing communication sites (excluding Black Ridge Site) would also be considered. In all cases, collocation on existing facilities would be preferred. No additional communication sites would be considered at other areas. The BLM reserves the right to develop minor communication facilities for administrative purposes.

I-70 and railroad maintenance or emergency repair would be coordinated with BLM, and actions taken to reasonably protect resource values. The BLM could also request the FAA to consider removing the requirement for the strobe light on the Upper Black Ridge Railroad Communication Site.

Mesa County and BLM staff would coordinate maintenance activities on Mesa County roads. In response to potential development on private inholdings, the BLM could request Mesa

County consideration of land use permitting restrictions on private inholdings for protecting the overall landscape and land use character. Requested restrictions could include limiting land uses or subdivision of property, limiting any development to a portion of the private land, locating and designing developments to minimize adverse impacts to the landscape, limiting use of exterior lights, or providing for limited public access.

Geology and Topography

The BLM would identify important geologic features for possible special management consideration while preserving and protecting the geologic resources.

Soils

The BLM would adhere to BMP and exercise careful placement of proposed trails and facilities. Soils would be managed to minimize erosion, salinity and selenium yields, and compaction. A strong emphasis on minimum impact techniques, through CCNCA visitor education, is also extremely important if protection and conservation of the soil resource for future generations is to be realized.

Minerals and Energy Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all federal land within the CCNCA and BRCW, and all land and interests in land acquired for the Conservation Area or the Wilderness by the United States are withdrawn from:

- 1) all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;
- 2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and
- 3) the operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws, and all amendments thereto.

Valid existing rights would be processed within specified or applicable time frames.

Water Resources

Surface Water

The BLM would manage all activity within the CCNCA to ensure that water quality standards are met, or exceeded, using BLM Land

Health Standards (Appendix 1, Standard 5–Water Quality) as the water quality indicator.

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Any activity in the CCNCA and BRCW would incorporate mitigation into management actions to protect water resources. Measures designed to minimize erosion and water quality deterioration would continue to be required in site-specific plans for any activity requiring surface disturbance in the CCNCA. Measures to minimize erosion and water quality affects would be further analyzed in environmental assessments for any surface disturbing activities in the CCNCA per requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The BLM would work with the Grand Valley Selenium Task Force to address elevated selenium levels in Salt Creek, and other entities to minimize sediment and salinity production within the CCNCA.

Ground Water

The BLM would continue to manage to preserve and protect ground water resources, including springs, and would pursue completion of an inventory of springs. Inventoried springs in the CCNCA would not be developed but would continue to be used by hikers and wildlife, as well as to sustain associated riparian areas. The BLM would continue to utilize existing water wells for stock watering purposes.

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Climate and Air Quality

Activities and projects on BLM-managed lands would comply with applicable local, state, and federal air quality regulations. National Ambient Air Quality Standards would be met, or exceeded, for all activity occurring in the CCNCA. Mitigation to minimize air quality degradation would be incorporated into project proposals as appropriate.

Noise

Public lands would be managed in accordance with Colorado NS 25-12-106.

Vegetation

The BLM would attain, or maintain, DPC objectives determined in the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated RMP and would maintain existing areas meeting land health standards (see Appendix 8). Vegetation restoration and reclamation projects would be implemented on those areas currently not meeting land health standards, in concert with other programs that would improve the land health on all priority areas, including the River Corridor, Rabbit Valley, Black Ridge, as well as on other sites that would benefit from treatment for various resources such as sage grouse, desert bighorn, and prairie dogs.

Special emphasis would be given to proper placement of roads and trails, along with rehabilitation and stabilization of existing roads and trails. Emphasis would also be placed on improving plant diversity, particularly in those areas dominated by cheatgrass or crested wheat grass, and in other priority areas. Reclamation and restoration could include the use of non-native plants and chemical treatment.

Vegetation–Weed Management

The BLM would manage noxious weeds using an IWM approach, while incorporating weed education information into CCNCA literature, web sites, and key entry points into the CCNCA. The BLM's Partners Against Weeds (PAWs) action plan is a comprehensive strategy providing guidance for preventing and controlling the spread of noxious weeds. Goals of the PAWs plan are prevention and detection, education and awareness, inventory, planning, Integrated Weed Management, monitoring and evaluation, and research and technology transfer. PAWs and additional guidance such as the Certified Weed-Free Forage Program are integral to the CCNCA weed management program.

There would also be extensive weed inventory and treatment prior to any facility construction, e.g. eliminating weeds before a designated river campsite is constructed.

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory of purple loosestrife and Hoary Cress in the River Corridor, conduct a 3-year inventory cycle for Wilderness, and a 5-year inventory for remaining acreage within the CCNCA.

Tamarisk

The BLM would manage tamarisk around spring sites in the Wilderness, releasing bio agents, if approved, for large-scale reduction in extensive stands. Tamarisk would also be managed at select sites in the River Corridor.

Purple Loosestrife

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater (Utah).

Russian Knapweed

The BLM would continue eradication efforts from Mee Corner to Mee Canyon, along the south bank of the Colorado River. It would also attempt eradication of Russian knapweed on Machinery Bottom, and continue Wilderness treatments of Russian knapweed and Canada thistle until completely eradicated.

Hoary Cress (Whitetop)

The BLM would conduct annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater to control Hoary cress and would continue treatment of infestations at Salt Creek and I-70.

Forestry

The practice of taking woodland products within the CCNCA would be discontinued. The option of allowing some cutting to facilitate clearing trees for trails, recreation projects, land health initiatives, and wildlife projects should be considered.

Wildlife, Fish and Aquatic Species

The BLM would facilitate CDOW population management plans and develop basic informational facilities for the Rabbit Valley Watchable Wildlife Site. The features making Rabbit Valley a designated State Important Bird Area would be guarded.

Objectives of the previous plans for this area would be pursued by implementing educational and habitat improvement projects such as producing 30-second spots to be aired on local TV, a short-range radio broadcast system, signs at visitor stops, brochures, activity books, and small water catchments (guzzlers). The positive tone of all educational messages would be continued.

A detailed inventory of fish and wildlife would continue to be developed, and the CCNCA would be managed to maintain the existing species. The BLM would work with appropriate wildlife management agencies, including CDOW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to monitor the fish and wildlife and provide information to management for actively responding when an impact threshold has been approached. Thresholds would be defined for each species to the extent of budget constraints. However, any unanticipated discovery could be evaluated for management action.

Special Status Species

In fulfilling all requirements under the Endangered Species Act, as well as BLM Policy Manual 6840, the BLM would meet habitat obligations for the six listed and two candidate species, while continuing to protect 25 BLM-listed sensitive species within the CCNCA. Three species listed under the state endangered species statute would also come under this umbrella. A detailed inventory of Special Status Species would continue to be developed.

Policies of a narrow tolerance for toxicants and pesticides, protection of peregrine eyries, installation of habitat improvements, and openness to restoration of native species populations would be continued.

The BLM would work with appropriate wildlife management agencies, including CDOW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to monitor the Special Status Species and provide information to management for actively responding when an impact threshold has been approached. These thresholds will be defined for each species. Nonetheless, unanticipated conditions would also be evaluated for management action.

Rangeland

Grazing use would be in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, FLPMA, Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), 43 CFR 100 and 4180, the Wilderness Act, grazing permits, and BLM Policy.

Current livestock management would be maintained and changes made if monitoring indicates downward trends or a failure to meet standards. Intensive grazing management plans (Allotment Management Plan) would be established for allotments where additional management is deemed necessary. Any grazing permit that is relinquished or canceled would be evaluated for future allocation and level of use.

Additional range improvements would be utilized to improve grazing management in accordance with grazing management plans. Vegetation studies and experiments would be maintained and rehabilitation efforts appropriate for the area would be applied.

Jones Canyon would be added to current exclusions on livestock grazing in Mee, Knowles, and Rattlesnake Canyons to protect riparian values. Other canyons would be monitored to determine if additional exclusions might be necessary in the future. The

Colorado River allotment would remain in an unallotted status to protect resources.

Domestic sheep use would be excluded in the Lower Bench and Colorado Ridge allotments and north of Black Ridge via existing agreements. Sheep grazing north of the river would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Domestic sheep use managed by Utah within the CCNCA would be evaluated when the permit is transferred.

The public would be educated on livestock grazing and its relationship to the environment and natural cycles.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be managed according to existing legislation, regulations, Executive Orders, and BLM policy. Measures to protect and manage cultural resources would be required in all land use activity plans, including those associated with recreation management and off-highway vehicle (OHV) activities. Measures would be designed in conjunction with appropriate consulting parties as defined by the BLM National Programmatic Agreement, Colorado State Protocol, and BLM Manual (8100 series) addressing cultural resource management.

Section 106 of the NHPA would be completed for federally funded or licensed undertakings prior to all surface-disturbing or other activities that could affect cultural resources. Identify cultural resources and areas of religious and cultural importance that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and assign to the appropriate cultural resource use allocation. Mitigation should be completed on historic properties that are adversely affected by the undertaking. Preservation of resources in place is the preferred mitigation strategy.

Proposed activities would not be approved until compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA has been completed and documented. Cultural resource condition would be monitored during implementation.

Develop and implement a base-level proactive cultural resource program required under Section 110 of the NHPA. A reasonable amount of outreach/customer service work, Native American consultation, interpretation and environmental education, cultural resource inventories, data recovery and recordation efforts,

restoration and protection of "at-risk" site efforts, and systematic monitoring of cultural sites treatments are to be completed annually. The level of proactive cultural resource program work would be determined annually within constraints of available funds and staff.

Paleontological Resources

Information on paleontological resources would continue to be gathered. A valid BLM Paleontological Resources Use Permit would be required for collection of all vertebrate and other scientifically important fossils. Within the BRCW, BLM scientific and educational surface collecting permits would allow surface collecting of up to a 1-meter by 1-meter square to a 20-inch depth per site. Any scientific collection that would disturb any area greater than that would require that an Environmental Assessment (EA) be done before such disturbance and/or collecting is permitted. Collection and removal would be done by small one-handed tools only.

The entire CCNCA would be closed to all recreational collecting of rocks, minerals, and fossils. No archeological materials such as chipped rocks, arrowheads, or other prehistoric or historic artifacts could be collected.

Recreation (by Zone)—Mack Ridge

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 3, the "modified recreation," or adaptive management alternative (see Figure ES-3).

Trail Proposals: Equestrian use would be limited to designated trails only. Trail A would be designated utilizing dirt roads and approximately ½-mile of new construction (single track). Segment E would be constructed to connect trail segment A and the Mary's Loop Trail. Construction of Trail K, which runs parallel along the south side of the frontage (Hawkeye) road, would be considered as a future option if traffic on the frontage road becomes a safety concern.

Connector J would be constructed between the southern-most point of the Troy Built Trail and the end of the Mack Ridge single-track trail. Trail F would be constructed connecting the Mack Ridge Trail to the Mack Ridge Trailhead. Segment D connecting segment F to the Mary's Loop access from the frontage road would also be constructed, allowing an alternative Mack Ridge Trail route for

equestrians. Segment G would be constructed from the frontage road to the gated dirt road.

Dirt Road Proposals: Roads would be gated or motorized barriers placed at 9 locations as shown on Figure ES-3. Motorized use would be restricted to the road portion of Lion's Loop to, and including access out to, the Overlook, county roads, and designated parking areas. The Lion's Loop road would be continued to allow access to within ¼-mile of the river but maintaining a buffer.

Camping: There would be no facilities and no dispersed camping within the Mack Ridge Zone.

Facilities: Restrooms would be provided at high-use parking areas.

Interpretation/Education: Trailhead signs would be provided reflecting information regarding challenge level and trail length. The trailhead sign at Horsethief Bench should recommend directional travel for mountain bikes (clockwise) and equestrians (counter-clockwise).

Permits: Full-time commercial mountain bike permits would be limited to 4 at any one time. Equestrian events would be limited to weekdays. Events with more than 50 participants would be limited to one event per month, plus two additional (14 maximum per year) but no more than two in any one month.

Recreation (by Zone)—Rabbit Valley

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 3, the "modified recreation," or adaptive management alternative (see Figure ES-7).

Trail Proposals: Equestrian use would be limited to designated trails only.

A single-track trail system would be developed on Harley Dome. Action No. 11, shown on Figure ES-7, would relocate Trail No. 2 off the valley floor to the escarpment west of the main entrance. Action No. 12 would connect Trail No. 4 to Trail No. 3 along the upper escarpment. Through Action No. 13, Trail No. 3 would be relocated to the opposite side of the drainage and connected to Trail No. 4. Noted as Action No. 14, dead-end routes protruding south from the frontage road east of the main entrance would be closed if they have no destination and provide no benefit.

Action No. 15 relocates Trail Nos. 4 and 5 to the valley floor and the dry wash running east-west in the same area. A single-track route would be designated (Action No. 16) that begins west of The Trail Through Time at the stock pond and continues north and west across the rim, dropping into the wash and continuing to the state line. Action No. 17 continues the existing route, extending the end of the Rabbit's Ear Trail to create a designated loop trail on top of the mesa.

In Action No. 20, a single-track loop (open to motorcycles) would be constructed off the Gibson access road to the east of the Rabbit's Ear Trail, and the road below the trail intersection would be gated to prevent public access to the Gibson property. The undesignated route just north of I-70 near the Utah border would be closed and rehabilitated.

Dirt Road Proposals: If feasible, a river access point would be provided from the southern end (road) of Trail No. 8 (see Action No. 18 on Figure ES-7), and a parking lot would be developed at the upper rim to maintain a ¼-mile river buffer and prevent vehicle access along the shore vicinity.

Camping: Dispersed camping sites would not be designated unless monitoring shows unacceptable impacts. Fire pans or fuel stoves would be required and woodcutting would be prohibited.

Target Shooting: There would be no target shooting north of I-70.

Facilities: Surfaces at parking areas, trailheads, and group campsites would be hardened by means other than paving.

Recreation (by Zone)—River Corridor

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 3, the "modified recreation," or adaptive management alternative (see Figure ES-9).

Trail Proposals: Group size would be limited to 25 individuals within the first two miles south of the Colorado River.

Dirt Road Proposals: There would be no access to the Colorado River from Rustler's Loop.

Camping: The current voluntary campsite reservation system at Loma Boat Launch would be continued, with selected campsites

identified on a map but not at the sites themselves. Fire pans or propane heaters would be required year-round for overnight use and would include day users from November 1 through April 30. Portable toilets would be required for all river users year-round, including users accessing the River Corridor from land. There would be no cutting of standing vegetation.

Recreation (by Zone)—Wilderness

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 3, the “modified recreation,” or adaptive management alternative (see Figure ES-10).

Trail Proposals: A hiking and equestrian trail, heading north from the Jones Canyon Trailhead, would be developed if needed for mitigating impacts. An alternate Mee Canyon Trailhead would be designated at the intersection of the upper and lower Black Ridge roads.

Group size would be limited to 25 individuals within the first two miles south of the Colorado River and to 12 individuals elsewhere in the Wilderness. Hiking and equestrian use would be allowed in the vicinity of Opal Hill.

Dirt Road Proposals: The maintenance levels would remain at the current standard for both the lower Black Ridge and Rattlesnake Arches access roads. A parking area would be created at the sagebrush flats on lower Black Ridge road just before the intersection with the upper Black Ridge road.

Camping: Historical camping spots, along the upper and lower Black Ridge roads, would be designated, and dispersed camping would be limited to designated sites only. Campers would be required to have portable toilets and fire pans (or fuel stoves). Woodcutting or gathering south of the Wilderness boundary would be limited to areas where chaining has occurred.

Facilities: Parking would be allowed, and the “turnaround” improved at the end of the Rattlesnake Arches access road, but the area would be contained to prevent encroachment. Additional parking areas would be created along the Rattlesnake Arches road, designed for turnarounds, and contained to prevent encroachment.

The Knowles Canyon Trailhead would be moved to Road F (see Figure ES-10) and expanded to accommodate additional parking.

2.3.4 *Alternative 4—Conservation Emphasis*

Lands and Rights-of-Way

The BLM would continue to acquire, from willing sellers, private inholdings within the CCNCA boundaries as well as along the boundaries.

ROW proposals would be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis and would be subject to constraints, sensitive resource areas, and issues identified in the CCNCA plan and other applicable documents and policies.

Utility line proposals, from within I-70 corridor to the Colorado River or in the upper Black Ridge road area, would be required to be located underground and along the edge of or within roadways, or within the railroad right-of-way. Additions or modification to aboveground utilities would only be considered within the existing utility corridors where aboveground facilities presently exist. Underground utility proposals would also be considered in these existing corridors. ROWs would be excluded from the BRCW area.

All roads administered by BLM would be maintained in their current condition, and no improvement would be permitted through ROW authorizations. Any new roads that could be authorized would be constructed to minimal widths and standards similar to nearby existing “jeep roads.” Any such new roads could also be gated to prevent or limit public vehicle access.

Additional communication towers at the existing Rabbit Valley Communication Site would be considered if the proposed use was located within 250 ft of the existing cellular telephone tower, involved a minimal and unlighted tower structure (1.5 ft lattice with wand at top, under 60 ft in height), and was not obvious to a casual observer from I-70 corridor. Minor additions or modifications of other existing communication sites (excluding Black Ridge Site) would also be considered. In all cases, collocation on existing facilities would be preferred. No additional communication sites would be considered at other areas. The BLM reserves the right to develop minor communication facilities for administrative purposes.

I-70 and railroad maintenance or emergency repair would be coordinated with BLM, and actions taken to reasonably protect resource values. The BLM could also request FAA to consider removing the requirement for the strobe light on the Upper Black Ridge Railroad Communication Site.

Mesa County and BLM staff would coordinate maintenance activities on Mesa County roads. In response to potential development on private inholdings, the BLM could request Mesa County consideration of land use permitting restrictions on private inholdings for protecting the overall landscape and land use character. Requested restrictions could include limiting land uses or subdivision of property, limiting any development to a portion of the private land, locating and designing developments to minimize adverse impacts to the landscape, limiting use of exterior lights, or providing for limited public access.

Geology and Topography

The BLM would identify important geologic features for possible special management consideration while preserving and protecting the geologic resources.

Soils

The BLM would adhere to BMP and exercise careful placement of proposed trails and facilities. Soils would be managed to minimize erosion, salinity and selenium yields, and compaction. A strong emphasis on minimum impact techniques, through CCNCA visitor education, is also extremely important if protection and conservation of the soil resource for future generations is to be realized.

Minerals and Energy Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all federal land within the CCNCA and BRCW, and all land and interests in land acquired for the Conservation Area or the Wilderness by the United States are withdrawn from:

- 1) all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;
- 2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and
- 3) the operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws, and all amendments thereto.

Valid existing rights would be processed within specified or applicable time frames.

Water Resources

Surface Water

The BLM would manage all activity within the CCNCA to ensure that water quality standards are met, or exceeded, using BLM Land Health Standards (Appendix 1, Standard 5–Water Quality) as the water quality indicator.

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Any activity in the CCNCA and BRCW would incorporate mitigation into management actions to protect water resources. Measures designed to minimize erosion and water quality deterioration would continue to be required in site-specific plans for any activity requiring surface disturbance in the CCNCA. Measures to minimize erosion and water quality affects would be further analyzed in environmental assessments for any surface disturbing activities in the CCNCA per requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The BLM would work with the Grand Valley Selenium Task Force to address elevated selenium levels in Salt Creek, and other entities to minimize sediment and salinity production within the CCNCA.

Ground Water

All water sources, including both surface water and ground water sources, would be inventoried to determine exact location, flow rates/volumes, types of beneficial uses of water at the location, type

of water development, condition of water development, and any sensitive species dependent on the water source.

The recreation, range management, and wildlife programs would identify the location and type of any water shortages that prevent them from meeting management objectives.

BLM would acquire water rights on all water sources within the CCNCA and Wilderness that BLM uses to meet management objectives. Water rights would be sought for livestock, wildlife, and recreation on all water sources that support those uses.

The authorizing legislation specifies that when BLM acquires water rights, BLM would follow the procedural and substantive provisions of Colorado water law.

Climate and Air Quality

Activities and projects on BLM-managed lands would comply with applicable local, state, and federal air quality regulations. National Ambient Air Quality Standards would be met, or exceeded, for all activity occurring in the CCNCA. Mitigation to minimize air quality degradation would be incorporated into project proposals as appropriate.

Noise

Public lands would be managed in accordance with Colorado NS 25-12-106.

Vegetation

The BLM would attain, or maintain, DPC objectives determined in the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated RMP and would maintain existing areas meeting land health standards (see Appendix 8). The BLM would also maximize efforts to restore those areas not meeting land health standards, in concert with other programs that would improve the land health on all priority areas, as well as on other sites that would benefit from treatment for various resources such as sage grouse, desert bighorn, and prairie dogs.

Surface disturbing actions or authorizations would be minimized, and special emphasis would be given to proper placement of roads and trails, along with rehabilitation and stabilization of existing roads and trails. Emphasis would also be placed on a maximum

reduction of cheatgrass. Vegetative restoration seeding projects would be conducted using the best available native plant species.

Vegetation–Weed Management

The BLM would manage noxious weeds using an IWM approach, while incorporating weed education information into CCNCA literature, web sites, and key entry points into the CCNCA. The BLM's Partners Against Weeds (PAWs) action plan is a comprehensive strategy providing guidance for preventing and controlling the spread of noxious weeds. Goals of the PAWs plan are prevention and detection, education and awareness, inventory, planning, Integrated Weed Management, monitoring and evaluation, and research and technology transfer. PAWs and additional guidance such as the Certified Weed-Free Forage Program are integral to the CCNCA weed management program.

There would also be extensive weed inventory and treatment prior to any facility construction, e.g. eliminating weeds before a designated river campsite is constructed.

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory of purple loosestrife and Hoary Cress in the River Corridor, conduct a 3-year inventory cycle for Wilderness, and a 5-year inventory for remaining acreage within the CCNCA.

Tamarisk

The BLM would manage tamarisk around spring sites in the Wilderness, releasing bio agents, if approved, for large-scale reduction in extensive stands. Tamarisk would also be managed for eradication at all pond sites and at select sites in the River Corridor.

Purple Loosestrife

The BLM would conduct an annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater (Utah).

Russian Knapweed

The BLM would continue eradication of all Russian knapweed from Loma to Westwater.

Hoary Cress (Whitetop)

The BLM would conduct annual inventory and eradication trips from Loma to Westwater to control Hoary Cress and would continue treatment of infestations at Salt Creek and I-70.

Forestry

The practice of taking woodland products within the CCNCA would be discontinued. The option of allowing some cutting to facilitate clearing trees for wildlife projects and land health projects should be considered.

Wildlife, Fish and Aquatic Species

The BLM would facilitate CDOW population management plans and develop basic informational facilities for the Watchable Wildlife Site designated as an Important Bird Area in Rabbit Valley.

Objectives of the previous plans for this area would be pursued by implementing educational and habitat improvement projects such as producing 30-second spots to be aired on local TV, a short-range radio broadcast system, signs at visitor stops, brochures, activity books, and small water catchments (guzzlers). The positive tone of all educational messages would be continued.

Habitat improvements would be implemented, including water developments, food and cover plot plantings, transplanting, prairie dog den insecticide dusting, nest boxes, protective barriers (such as tree armor against beavers), and barrier removal (such as pinyon-juniper thinning for bighorn sheep).

Special Status Species

In fulfilling all requirements under the Endangered Species Act, as well as BLM Policy Manual 6840, the BLM would meet habitat obligations for the six listed and two candidate species, while continuing to protect 25 BLM-listed sensitive species within the CCNCA. Three species listed under the state endangered species statute would also come under this umbrella.

Policies of a narrow tolerance for toxicants and pesticides, protection of peregrine eyries, and openness to restoration of native species populations would be continued.

Habitat improvements would be implemented, including water developments, food and cover plot plantings, transplanting, prairie

dog den insecticide dusting, backwater development for native fish, and artificial dens (kit fox, burrowing owl).

The BLM would work with CDOW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to monitor the Special Status Species.

Rangeland

Grazing use would be in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, FLPMA, Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), 43 CFR 100 and 4180, the Wilderness Act, grazing permits, and BLM Policy.

Current livestock management would be re-evaluated and changes made if monitoring indicates downward trends or a failure to meet standards. Intensive grazing management plans (Allotment Management Plan) would be established for allotments. Any grazing permit that is relinquished or canceled would not be reallocated.

Construction of additional range improvements would be limited. Vegetation studies and experiments would be increased, and rehabilitation efforts would be applied if appropriate for the area.

Livestock grazing would be prohibited in all major river tributary canyons to protect riparian values, and the Colorado River allotment would remain in an unallotted status to protect resources.

Domestic sheep grazing would not be authorized in the CCNCA south of the Colorado River. Sheep grazing north of the river would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Domestic sheep use managed by Utah within the CCNCA would be evaluated when the permit is transferred.

The public would be educated on livestock grazing and its relationship to the environment and natural cycles.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be managed according to existing legislation, regulations, Executive Orders, and BLM policy. Measures to protect and manage cultural resources would be required in all land use activity plans, including those associated with recreation management and off-highway vehicle (OHV) activities. Measures would be designed in conjunction with appropriate consulting parties as defined by the BLM National

Programmatic Agreement, Colorado State Protocol, and BLM Manual (8100 series) addressing cultural resource management.

Section 106 of the NHPA would be completed for federally funded or licensed undertakings prior to all surface-disturbing or other activities that could affect cultural resources. Identify cultural resources and areas of religious and cultural importance that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and assign to the appropriate cultural resource use allocation. Mitigation should be completed on historic properties that are adversely affected by the undertaking. Preservation of resources in place is the preferred mitigation strategy.

Proposed activities would not be approved until compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA has been completed and documented. Cultural resource condition would be monitored during implementation.

Develop and implement an accelerated proactive cultural resource program required under Section 110 of the NHPA. A reasonable amount of outreach/customer service work, Native American consultation, interpretation and environmental education, cultural resource inventories, data recovery and recordation efforts, restoration and protection of "at-risk" site efforts, and systematic monitoring of cultural sites treatments are to be completed annually. The level of proactive cultural resource program work would be determined annually within constraints of available funds and staff.

Paleontological Resources

Information on paleontological resources would continue to be gathered. A valid BLM Paleontological Resources Use Permit would be required for collection of all vertebrate and other scientifically important fossils. Within the BRCW, BLM scientific and educational surface collecting permits would allow surface collecting of up to a 1-meter by 1-meter square to a 20 inch depth per site. Any scientific collection that would disturb any area greater than that would require that an Environmental Assessment (EA) be done before such disturbance and/or collecting is permitted. Collection and removal would be done by small one-handed tools only.

The entire CCNCA would be closed to all recreational collecting of rocks, minerals, and fossils. No archeological materials such as

chipped rocks, arrowheads, or other prehistoric or historic artifacts could be collected.

Recreation (by Zone)—Mack Ridge

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 4, the “conservation emphasis” alternative (see Figure ES-4).

Trail Proposals: Equestrian use would be limited to designated trails only. There would be no new trail, or trail segment, construction.

Dirt Road Proposals: Roads would be gated or motorized barriers would be placed at 9 locations as shown on Figure ES-4. Motorized use would be restricted to the road portion of Lion’s Loop to, and including access out to, the Overlook, county roads, and designated parking areas.

Camping: There would be no facilities within the Mack Ridge Zone.

Facilities: Restrooms would be provided at high-use parking areas.

Interpretation/Education: Trailhead signs would be provided reflecting information regarding challenge level and trail length. Interpretive materials would recommend directional travel but not shown on trailhead signs.

Permits: Full-time commercial mountain bike permits would be limited to 4 at any one time. Equestrian events would be limited to weekdays. Events with more than 50 participants would be limited to one event per month, plus two additional (14 maximum per year) but no more than two in any one month.

Recreation (by Zone)—Rabbit Valley

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 4, the “conservation emphasis” alternative (see Figure ES-8).

Trail Proposals: Equestrian use would be limited to designated trails only. There would be no trails on Harley Dome. Shown as Action Nos. 11-13 on Figures ES-6 and ES-7 for Alternative 3, Trail Nos. 2, 3, and 4 would be closed in Alternative 4 if resource impacts could not be mitigated.

The dead-end routes (Action No. 14 on Figure ES-6) protruding south from the frontage road east of the main entrance would be

closed. Action No. 15 on Figure ES-8 relocates Trail Nos. 4 and 5 to the valley floor and the dry wash running east-west in the same area. A single-track west of the Trail Through Time at the stock pond would be closed and restored, and Action No. 17 would close the existing route extending the end of the Rabbit's Ear Trail.

A single-track loop would not be constructed off the Gibson access road, but Action No. 20 shows that the road below the trail intersection would be gated to prevent public access to the Gibson property. The undesignated route just north of I-70 near the Utah border (Action No. 21) would be closed and rehabilitated.

Dirt Road Proposals: No river access road would be constructed in Alternative 4 (Action No. 18 on Figures ES-6 and ES-7 for Alternatives 2 and 3).

Camping: Dispersed campsites would be designated, and fire pans or fuel stoves would be required. There would be no woodcutting or gathering of dead and down material allowed.

Target Shooting: There would be no target shooting north of I-70.

Facilities: Surfaces at parking areas, trailheads, and group campsites would be hardened only when needed to prevent resource impacts.

Recreation (by Zone)—River Corridor

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 4, the “conservation emphasis” alternative (see Figure ES-9).

Trail Proposals: Group size would be limited to 25 individuals within the first two miles south of the Colorado River.

Dirt Road Proposals: There would be no access to the Colorado River from Rustler's Loop.

Camping: Campsites would be designated and identified on a map, as well as at the sites themselves. Campers would register for the sites at the Loma Boat Launch. Fire pans or propane heaters would be required year-round for all users. Portable toilets would be required for all river users year-round, including users accessing the River Corridor from land. There would be no woodcutting or gathering of dead and down material.

Recreation (by Zone)—Wilderness

The following proposed actions would apply for Alternative 4, the “conservation emphasis” alternative (see Figure ES-10).

Trail Proposals: There would be no development of a trail heading north from the Jones Canyon Trailhead, and an alternate trailhead for Mee Canyon would not be designated.

Groups traveling in the lower two miles of Mee and Knowles Canyons would be limited in size to 25 individuals and would be limited to 12 individuals in the remainder of the Wilderness.

Hiking and equestrian use would be allowed in the vicinity of Opal Hill.

Dirt Road Proposals: The maintenance levels of both the lower Black Ridge and Rattlesnake Arches access roads would remain at the current standard. Additional parking would not be created at the sagebrush flats on the lower Black Ridge road.

Camping: Historical camping spots, along the upper and lower Black Ridge roads, would be designated, and dispersed camping would be limited to designated sites only. Campers would be required to have portable toilets and fire pans (or fuel stoves). No woodcutting or gathering would be allowed at designated campsite areas south of the Wilderness boundary. Campers would be required to bring their own fuel.

Facilities: Parking would be allowed, and the “turnaround” improved at the end of the Rattlesnake Arches access road, but the area would be contained to prevent encroachment. There would be no new parking areas created along the Rattlesnake Arches road.

The Knowles Canyon Trailhead would not be moved to Road F nor expanded to accommodate additional parking (Figure ES-10).

2.3.5 *Management Common to All Alternatives—Recreation*

Recreation (by Zone)—Mack Ridge

The following proposed actions in the Mack Ridge Zone are appropriate for all four alternatives developed for this RMP (see Figures ES-1 through ES-4):

Trail Proposals: Designated uses for existing trails in the Mack Ridge Zone would be as follows:

- Horsethief Loop, Kokopelli's Trail (within the Mack Ridge area), Lion's Loop, Mary's Loop, Steve's Loop, Rustler's Loop, and Troy's Loop—hiking, equestrian and mountain bikes.
- Mack Ridge Trail—hiking and mountain biking to the first intersection with the remainder of the trail allowing equestrian use.
- Moore Fun Trail—hiking and mountain biking only.

New trail proposals include the following (*letter designations are for planning purposes only; constructed trails would be named when project plans are developed*):

- Construct trail segment C to replace the end of the dirt road presently used as part of Steve's Loop.
- Close and restore all non-designated trails, and limit all motorized/mechanized use to designated trails and roads only.
- Modify trails as needed to mitigate impacts.
- Require that all dogs need to be leashed in high-use areas including parking areas, trailheads, campgrounds, and areas where safety is a concern. Dogs are not required to be on a leash in other areas but must be under voice control.

Dirt Road Proposals: A number of roads, or segments of roads, would be closed and restored. This includes the road providing the same access as trail segment G, as well as the end of the road on Steve's Loop providing the same access as segment C. The short, dead-end segment heading south from Hawkeye Road would also be closed and restored, as would the segment adjacent to the dirt road connecting the county road to the west end of trail proposal A. All non-designated roads, not used for administrative purposes, would be closed and rehabilitated. As a way to mitigate impacts, roads could be modified as needed.

Target Shooting: There would be no discharging of any projectile, by means of (including but not limited to) firearms, bows, crossbows, and paintball guns with the exception of official law enforcement activities, certain military operations, and hunting activities in conformance with existing laws and regulations.

Hunting: Hunting would be allowed in conformance with CDOW laws and regulations.

Facilities: All parking facilities would be contained to prevent gradual encroachment into the surrounding area. The Mack Ridge area would be designated for day use only.

Interpretation/Education: A comprehensive “Interpretive Plan” for the CCNCA considering all aspects of interpretation, education, and public outreach would be developed.

Permit Program: Tour companies could not have more than a total of 15 riders (counting clients and guides) on the Mack Ridge trail system at any one time. Full-time equestrian guide permits would not be issued for the Mack Ridge area. When possible, large events in January and February would be avoided to reduce stress to livestock (calving season), and competitive events would be limited to hiking and running events.

Recreation (by Zone)—Rabbit Valley

The following proposed actions in the Rabbit Valley Zone are appropriate for all four alternatives developed for this RMP (see Figures ES-5 through ES-8):

Trail Proposals: All motorized and mechanized use would be limited to designated roads and trails, while The Trail Through Time, McDonald Creek Trail, and the Rabbit’s Ear Trail are all designated for hiking only. Wild Horse Mesa would be designated as no motorized or mechanized use, and if the Joufflas Property were to be acquired, existing routes on Wild Horse Mesa would be designated as hiking and equestrian use only (No. 10 trail on Figures ES-5 through ES-8). The trail running parallel to and south of I-70 would also be designated for hiking and equestrian use (No. 22 trail on Figures ES-5 through ES-8). In general, locating trails near known paleontological or cultural sites would be avoided. Trails that are not designated and closed trails would be rehabilitated unless needed for administrative purposes. As a way to mitigate impacts, trails would be modified as needed. All dogs need to be on a leash in high-use areas including parking areas, trailheads, campgrounds, and areas where safety is a concern. Dogs are not required to be on a leash in other areas but must be under voice control.

Dirt Road Proposals: All dirt roads to be maintained for public access would be designated, and non-designated roads would be closed. As shown on Figures ES-5 through ES-8, roads (No. 7) north of I-70 would be closed. The BLM would restore closed roads having no administrative benefit and not included in range allotment

agreements. As a way to mitigate impacts, trails would be modified as needed.

Camping: Camping in the Rabbit Valley Zone would be limited to no more than seven consecutive nights, and portable toilets are mandatory for overnight, dispersed use. If the Joufflas property south of I-70 were to be acquired, a formal campground would be constructed on that property (No. 23 on Figures ES-5 through ES-8).

Firearms: There would be no discharge of any projectile, by means of (including but not limited to) firearms, bows, crossbows, and paintball guns with the exception of official law enforcement activities, certain military operations, and hunting activities in conformance with existing laws and regulations. One additional exception would be the possible designation of a shooting range north of I-70, with the location to be determined through this planning process.

Hunting: Hunting is allowed in conformance with CDOW laws and regulations.

Facilities: The BLM Grand Junction Field Office would coordinate with BLM Moab (Utah) in developing and maintaining management consistency along the common state boundary shared by Rabbit Valley and Utah Rims. All parking facilities would be contained to prevent gradual encroachment into the surrounding areas, minimizing impact to the resource. A large area for a recreational park and events (No. 5 on Figures ES-5 through ES-8) would be developed and designated. Developing and designating a second site, for smaller events, at the disturbed alcove location south of the entrance would also be done. This site provides protection from the area's typical high winds. A site plan would be developed, considering off-loading requirements for both horses and off-highway vehicles (OHV), for the vicinity of the Rabbit Valley primary entrance south of I-70 (exit 2).

Interpretation/Education: The BLM would identify partners and develop Friends organizations to assist with outreach and education. The BLM would also strive to involve user groups, volunteers, and other interested public in maintaining the resources through partnerships, adopt-an-area programs, and special events. A comprehensive "Interpretive Plan" for the CCNCA considering all aspects of interpretation, education, and public outreach would be developed.

Recreation (by Zone)—River Corridor

The following proposed actions in the River Corridor Zone are appropriate for all four alternatives developed for this RMP (see Figure ES-9):

Camping: No camping would be allowed on Chow Doggone Island. All fires in this planning zone must be contained in a fire pan, whether visitor access is via the river or land, or the visit is a single day or multiple days.

Target Shooting: There would be no discharging of any projectile, by means of (including but not limited to) firearms, bows, crossbows, and paintball guns with the exception of official law enforcement activities, certain military operations, and hunting activities in conformance with existing laws and regulations.

Hunting: Hunting is allowed in conformance with CDOW laws and regulations.

Interpretation/Education: The BLM would identify partners and develop Friends organizations to assist with outreach and education, as well as provide education and information through sources other than direct posting along the River Corridor. A comprehensive “Interpretive Plan” for CCNCA considering all aspects of interpretation, education, and public outreach would be developed.

Miscellaneous: All dogs need to be on a leash in high-use areas, including parking areas, trailheads, campgrounds, and areas where safety is a concern. Dogs are not required to be on a leash in other areas but must be under voice control.

Recreation (by Zone)—Wilderness

The following proposed actions in the Wilderness Zone are appropriate for all four alternatives developed for this RMP (see Figure ES-10):

Trail Proposals: Motorized and mechanized use is not allowed within BRCW, except for administrative use and search and rescue in accordance with current Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). As a way to mitigate impacts, trails would be modified as needed.

Designated trails within the Wilderness are available for hiking and equestrian use, although some of the trails are not traversable by horse. Although some portions of the designated trails in the Wilderness Zone fall outside of the Wilderness boundary, they are still limited to hiking and equestrian use. Designated trails include the Rattlesnake Arches Trail; Mee Canyon Trail; Knowles Canyon Trail; Jones Canyon Trail; and the Pollock Bench Trails System, which includes Flume Canyon (partially outside of the Wilderness) and the Devils Canyon Trails System, which includes Kodel's Canyon (partially outside the Wilderness).

The Dinosaur Hill Trail is outside of the Wilderness boundary and is for hiking only.

All dogs need to be on a leash in high-use areas, including parking areas, trailheads, campgrounds, and areas where safety is a concern. Dogs are not required to be on a leash in other areas but must be under voice control.

Dirt Road Proposals: Motorized vehicle use on the lower Black Ridge road, from August 15 to February 15 only, would be allowed. Non-designated roads, not used for administrative purposes, would be closed.

Spur Roads A, B, C, F, G, H, and I would be designated and contained to prevent lengthening. Spurs D and E would be closed and rehabilitated. An area for horse trailer parking would be developed off the end of Spur C (Figure ES-10).

The acquired "Gore Parcel" would be closed to motorized/mechanized access, except as needed for administrative use and allotment agreements. The dirt road, west of the yellow gate on BS Road, is closed to motorized/mechanized access except as needed for administrative use and allotment agreements. Spot graveling would be allowed as needed for maintenance of BS Road.

Camping: Dispersed camping south of the Wilderness boundary would be limited to designated sites, allowed at the ends of spur roads A, B, C, F, G, H, and I along BS Road (Figure ES-10). Additional dispersed camping sites would be designated along BS Road from the Knowles Canyon Trailhead to the Jones Canyon Trailhead. The Rattlesnake Arches access road and trailhead would be designated for day-use only as would the vicinity within and near the outside of the Rattlesnake Arches Loop Trail (no camping).

If future demand or resource impacts dictate the need for a campground outside the southern boundary of the Wilderness, the location should be at the triangle where the upper Black Ridge road and the Mee Canyon access road intersect (if outside of the wilderness boundary) or at the sagebrush flat on the lower Black Ridge road just before the intersection with the upper Black Ridge road.

Cutting of dead or live standing vegetation for firewood inside the Wilderness boundary is not allowed.

Target Shooting: There would be no discharging of any projectile, by means of (including but not limited to) firearms, bows, crossbows, and paintball guns with the exception of official law enforcement activities, certain military operations, and hunting activities in conformance with existing laws and regulations.

Hunting: Hunting is allowed in conformance with CDOW laws and regulations.

Facilities: All parking facilities would be contained to prevent gradual encroachment into the surrounding area. Restrooms would be constructed at various designated Wilderness trailheads only as the need arises.

The Kings View access road (Mesa County I.3 Road) would have no Wilderness access trailheads beyond the Pollock Bench Trailhead.

Parking would be allowed at the flat rock surface area on the south side of BS Road to the southwest of the Knowles Canyon Trailhead, while parking along the Rattlesnake Arches access road would only be allowed at designated locations.

All fences that no longer have a purpose would be removed.

When dog waste in high-use areas becomes a problem, methods of controlling it would be developed.

The BLM would work closely with the Colorado National Monument (COLM) and the urban interface communities adjacent to the CCNCA regarding, but not limited to, the following initiatives:

Colorado National Monument

Trail connectivity and management consistency.

Urban Interface

Balance community needs with resource protection.
Work with local schools in resolving resource concerns at Dinosaur Hill and CCNCA land along Kings View Road.
Work with city of Fruita in acquiring the Snooks Bottom parcel, supporting its “Gateway Community” concept, and trail connectivity.

Interpretation/Education: Current posted visitor information regarding road conditions and closures, along with user guidelines for the upper and lower Black Ridge roads, would be maintained. All-terrain vehicle (ATV) use would be directed to the Rabbit Valley Zone as a way to discourage use outside the upper Wilderness vicinity. Educational material should include information regarding private property and the intended uses of various parking facilities in the Wilderness Front Country.

Opportunities offering joint information and education regarding the vicinity within the common boundaries shared by the CCNCA and COLM would be identified. A comprehensive CCNCA “Interpretive Plan” considering all aspects of interpretation, education, and public outreach would be developed.

BLM would collaborate with the FAA in developing appropriate flight restrictions over the CCNCA and would request that the CCNCA and its advisory restrictions be included on the National Aeronautical Charts.

Permits: No Special Recreation Permits would be granted for air tours over the CCNCA.